

PART II

Population

Where Washington's People Live

Because of the influences of topography, climate, accessibility and recent industrialization, Washington's population is distributed unevenly throughout the state. Over two-thirds of the people live in the western portion, concentrated largely in the industrial cities of Puget Sound. The Olympic Mountains and Willapa Hills of the Coast Range and the Cascade Mountains stand out as sparsely populated areas in western Washington. The Willamette-Puget Sound Lowland, extending from Vancouver on the Columbia River northward to Bellingham near the Canadian border, is the major population belt of the state. It contains a fairly well-distributed rural population on its river deltas and rolling, glacial drift plains.

The mountains, hills, plateaus, irrigable valleys and dry climatic conditions cause a generally clustered pattern of population settlement in eastern Washington. Mountainous areas including the eastern Cascade Mountain slope, the Okanogan Highlands, the Blue Mountains and the Selkirks have but few people. Dryland and upland areas which cannot be irrigated, such as large portions of the Waterville Plateau, the Channelled Scablands and the hills of Yakima County, are thinly settled. Both rural and urban population is concentrated in the irrigated Yakima, Kittitas, Wenatchee, Okanogan and Walla Walla Valleys and in the Pasco and Quincy Basins. In the far eastern section--the Palouse Hills--the uniform soil, topography and moderate rainfall permits a more evenly distributed population. The industrialized Spokane metropolitan area and the rich agricultural Yakima Valley are the major population clusters of eastern Washington.

Growth of Population

Washington was explored by Spanish, Russian, British and American expeditions between 1592 and 1805, but no settlement occurred until 1810. Ownership of the area was disputed by America and Great Britain. A compromise, the Joint Occupancy Treaty of 1818, permitted both American and British fur traders and settlers to live north of the Columbia River. British interests (the Northwest Company and the Hudson's Bay Company) established fur trading posts at Spokane and Walla Walla in 1810 and 1818. American claims were strengthened by the Lewis and Clark Expedition (1804-1805) and by the settlements at Fort Spokane, Okanogan and Astoria by the Pacific Fur Company. The British increased their influence as they established agricultural settlements at Fort Vancouver and Fort Nisqually between 1824 and 1833. Settlement by Americans north of the Columbia, although permitted by treaty, was discouraged by the Hudson's Bay Company which desired to maintain its fur trade monopoly.

A growing tide of American land settlers over the Oregon Trail during the 1840's changed the balance of control in favor of the United States. Most of the Americans settled in the Willamette Valley of Oregon. Unhindered by the British, several hundred American settlers moved northward across the Columbia into the Puget Sound country and soon outnumbered the British fur traders.

The conflict of interests was solved by the Oregon Treaty of 1846, which gave the United States the present area of Washington and established the Canadian boundary as it exists today. Oregon Territory (including all of the present state of Washington) was created in 1848 by Congress, with its capitol in Salem, Oregon. Settlers north of the Columbia met in 1851 at the Monticello Convention in present Longview, Washington, and asked for a separate territorial government. Washington Territory was created March 2, 1851, with a capitol at Olympia on Puget Sound. Isaac I. Stevens was appointed as Governor.

Population growth was slow before 1860. Lack of roads, the long distance from the East, and the difficulty of clearing the dense forests of the Puget Sound country kept immigration to a minimum. Indian hostility prevented settlement in most of eastern Washington prior to 1858, and that tended to slow movement into the Puget Sound Basin. The Washington population was only 11,594 according to the 1860 Census.

In 1863, the Washington territorial boundaries were changed to the present state lines by the creation of Idaho Territory. The Census of 1870 was the first to follow the present boundaries, and it enumerated a population of 23,995. Population grew rapidly from 1870 to 1890. New transcontinental railroads brought large waves of immigrants from the East and Europe. The completion of the Union Pacific to the Columbia River brought new settlers into southeastern Washington. When the Northern Pacific reached Spokane in 1880 and was continued on toward Puget Sound, settlers occupied the Palouse and Big Bend wheat lands and the Yakima Valley. In 1883, six new counties were created in eastern Washington. Expansion of coastwise shipping and lumbering built up the cities on Puget Sound and at Grays Harbor. Washington Territory was admitted to the Union as a state in 1889. The population at that time was 350,000.

The period 1900-1910 was a decade of rapid growth in which the state gained 621,000 persons, more than doubling to 1,111,990. Two other railroads, Great Northern and Chicago, Milwaukee and Saint Paul, reached Puget Sound in 1893 and 1909, respectively. The lumber industry and agriculture supported more people; land and timber seekers homesteaded free public domain lands in the mountainous areas. The Alaskan gold rush doubled Seattle's population within a decade. Railroads and ships brought large numbers of people from Europe, who took up lumbering, fishing, mining and agriculture. Ranked numerically according to the 1920 Census, the largest foreign-born groups in the state were Canadians (142,000), Swedes (39,000), Norwegians (34,000), English (23,000), Germans (22,000), Italians (18,000), Finns (12,500), Russians (11,000) and Irish (9,000).

Between 1910 and 1940 population grew at a slower but steady rate. The increase was about 20,000 per year. The lumber industry began to decline after 1929. Reduced employment and a growing scarcity of land were reflected in a slower rate of population growth. However, during the 1930's, many farmers from the Great Plains drought areas moved overland to Washington seeking farming opportunities.

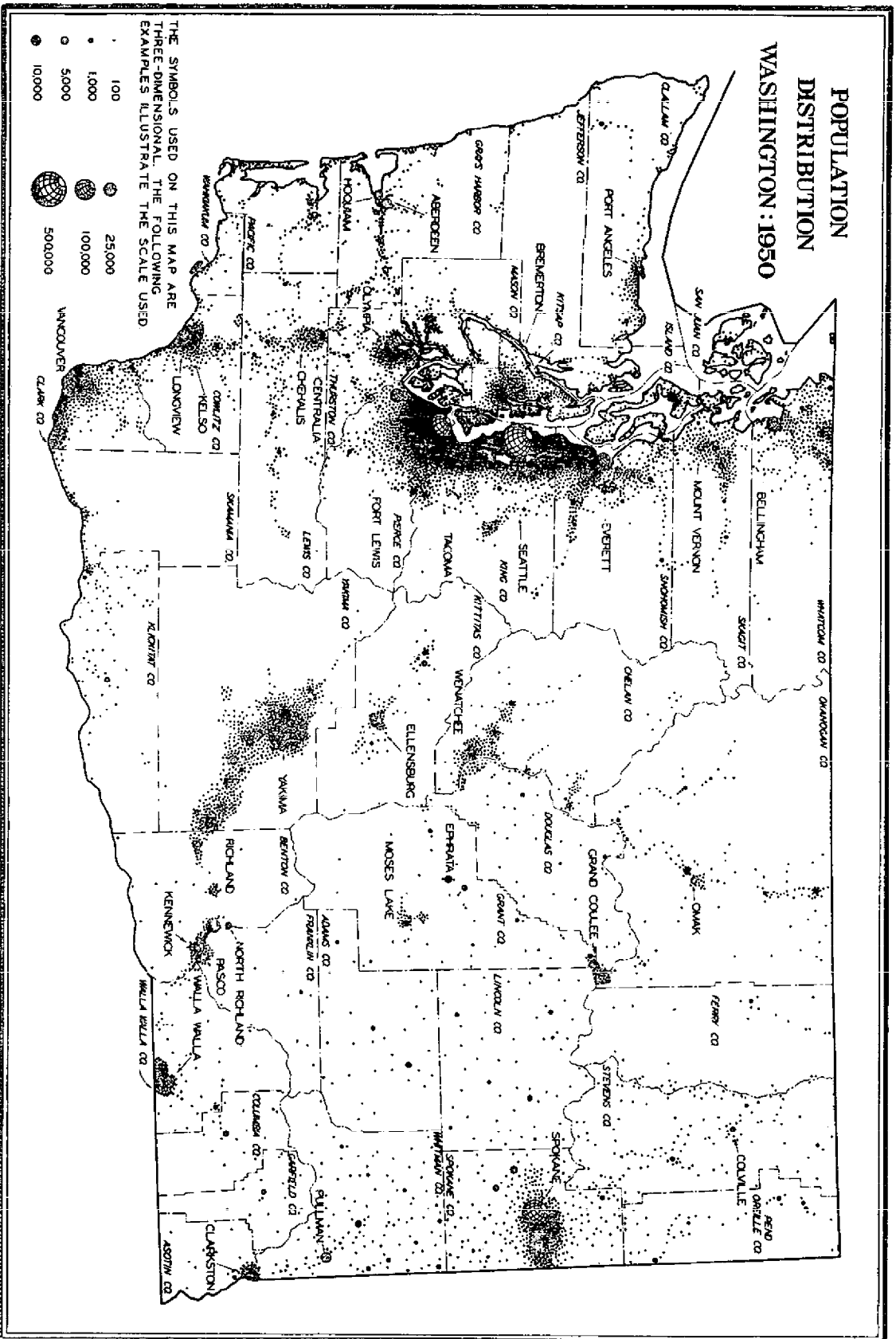
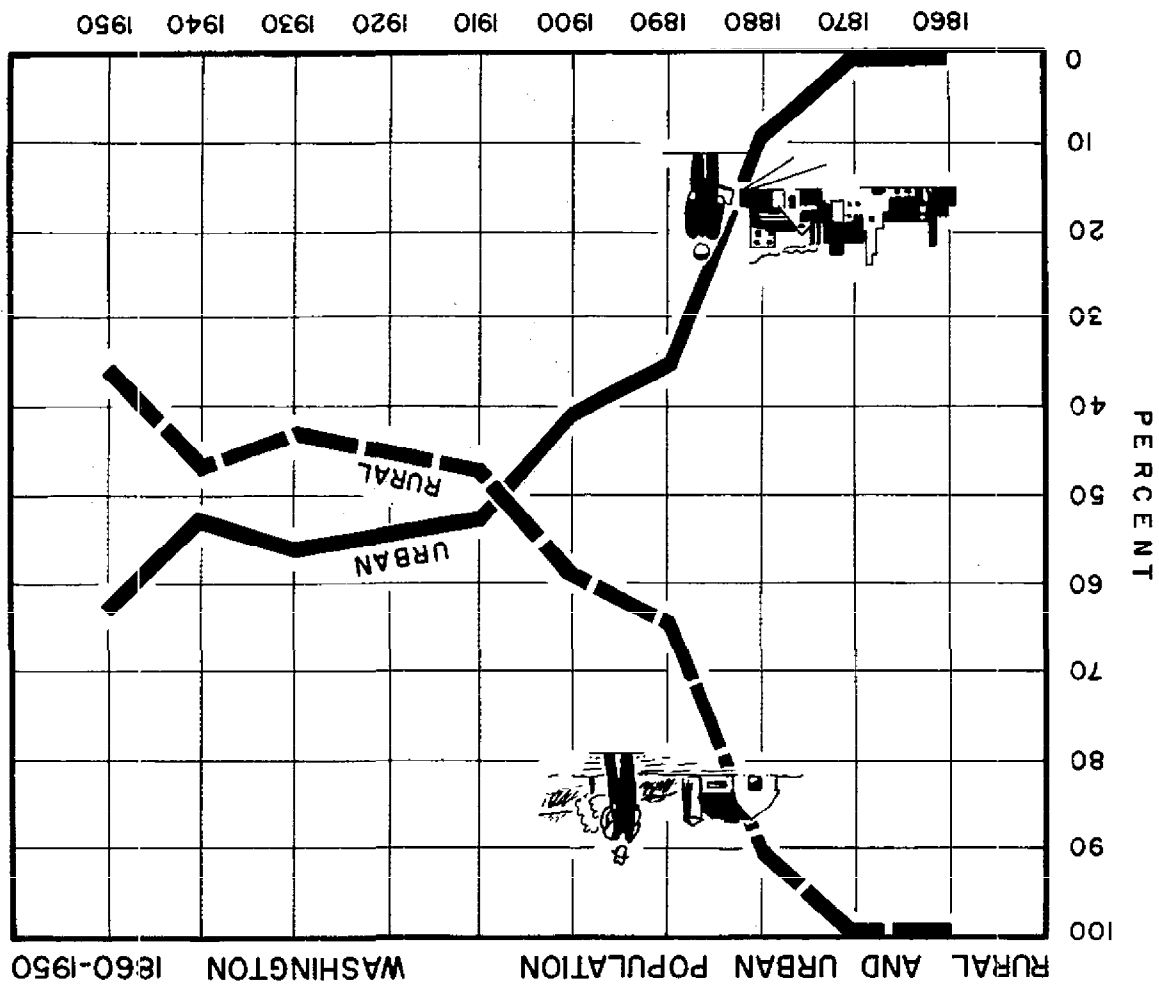
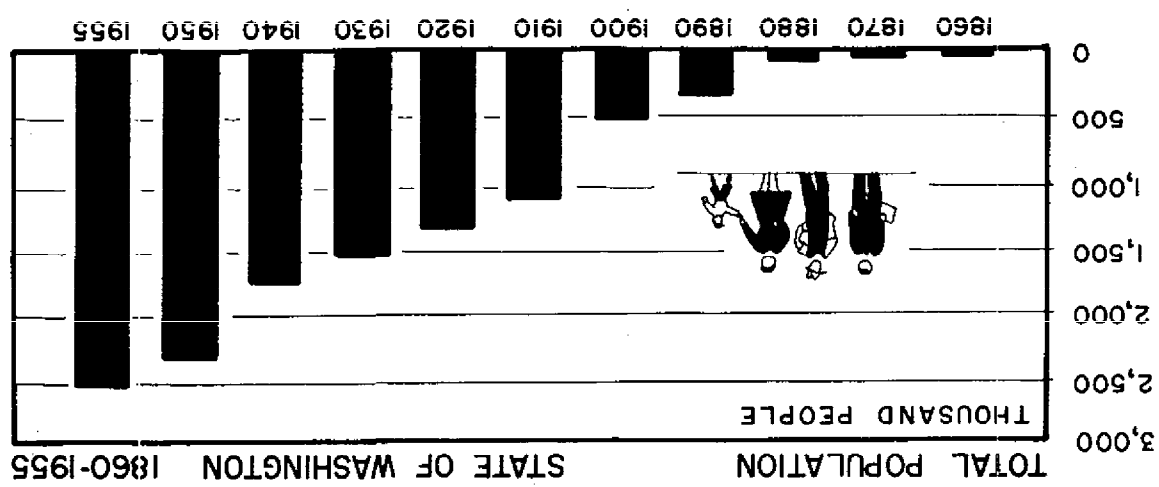


Figure 6.- DISTRIBUTION OF POPULATION IN WASHINGTON, 1950 (Map by courtesy of Population Research Office, Washington State Census Board).



SOURCES OF DATA: U.S. Census 1860-1950; Washington State Census Board, Estimate - 1955.

WASHINGTON CROP AND LIVESTOCK REPORTING SERVICE.

The 1940-1950 decade brought the greatest increase in Washington history. Primarily an overland movement of laborers to new defense industries, it resulted in an increase of 642,772 in ten years, raising the state population to 2,378,963 in 1950. Most of the new growth was in the industrial metropolitan districts in King, Pierce, Kitsap, Clark and Spokane Counties and at the Federal atomic works in Benton County.

Urban and Rural Population

In 1870 the entire population of Washington was living in rural areas--in villages and on farms. By 1900, 211,477 of the population of Washington, or 40.8 percent, were living in urban areas. In 1950, according to the Census definition of "urban" which includes residents of towns of 2,500 and larger, 1,503,166 persons, or 63.2 percent, were living in urban areas. And over 52 percent lived in three standard metropolitan areas comprised of Seattle, Tacoma, Spokane and their surrounding suburban cities and towns. This trend follows the national pattern.

Table 1.- Population of Washington
1860-1955

Year	Population
1860	11,594
1870	23,955
1880	75,116
1890	357,232
1900	518,103
1910	1,141,990
1920	1,356,621
1930	1,563,396
1940	1,736,191
1950	2,378,963
1955	2,580,000

Sources: U.S. Census, Population;
Washington State Census
Board, April 1, 1955
Estimate.

Bellingham (35,700), Everett (34,100), Bremerton (32,200), Walla Walla (25,400) and Longview (23,500).

The rural population is predominantly rural nonfarm, consisting of 602,026 persons who live in the country, but do not operate farms. The rural farm population decreased about one-fifth between 1940 and 1950, and numbered only 273,771, or 11.5 percent of the state's total 1950 population of 2,378,963. As a result of the farm-to-city trend in Washington, about one person in ten is living on a farm and about six persons out of ten are living in a town or city larger than 2,500.

According to the 1955 estimates of the Washington Census Board, the ten leading cities of Washington ranked as follows: Seattle (555,000), Spokane (182,000), Tacoma (156,000), Yakima (43,000), Vancouver (41,950),

Population of Island County

Island County population, with the exception of the 1920-1930 decade, has gained steadily since 1860. Estimated 1955 population was 13,000, the county ranking 24th among the 39 Washington counties. The density of population is about one person to each 10 acres or 63 persons per square mile. Excluding the Naval Air Station, the population is entirely rural and is well distributed on farms and in rural residences and towns over both Camano and Whidbey Islands. In general, settlement is heaviest along the Puget Sound shorelines in small ports and shoreline settlements. Oak Harbor, the county seat, is the largest town with a population of 2,325 in 1957.

Population growth has been rapid since 1940. The establishment of the Naval Air Station at Oak Harbor resulted in an increase from about 6,100 in 1940 to over 11,000 by 1950. Since 1950 expansion of Naval aviation activity together with more persons seeking residences and retirement to homes on the shorelines of the islands expanded population to 13,000 by 1955. Improved access by bridges from Whidbey and Camano Islands to the mainland have also resulted in more rural settlements and rural property development.

Table 2.- Population of Island County
1860-1955

Year	Population	Percent Rural	Percent Urban
1860	294	100	0
1870	626	100	0
1880	1,087	100	0
1890	1,787	100	0
1900	1,870	100	0
1910	4,704	100	0
1920	5,489	100	0
1930	5,369	100	0
1940	6,098	100	0
1950	11,079	100	0
1955	13,000	100	0

Source: U.S. Census, Population

The population of Island County is predominantly rural non-farm according to the Census of 1950. Total rural non-farm population--those persons living in towns and in the country and not on land units classified as farms--totaled 7,886. Rural farm population--those persons living on farms--was smaller, numbering 3,193. In 1950 farm people made up 40 percent of the total population. The farm population of Island County ranked 25th in the state.

Table 3.- Population of Incorporated Places
Island County, 1910-1957

Incorporated City or Town	1910	1920	1930	1940	1950	1957 ^{1/}
Coupeville	310	343	277	325	379	680
Langley	--	274	268	338	427	535
Oak Harbor	--	337	362	376	1,193	2,325

^{1/} Populations for 1957 are estimates of the Washington State Census Board, September 15, 1957.

Sources: U.S. Census, Population.

Washington State Census Board.

Nearly half of the rural non-farm people live in three incorporated towns which have been growing in size since 1910. Coupeville, farming center and residential area, has grown with each census. By 1957 it was estimated to have 680 inhabitants. Oak Harbor, the county seat and the trade and residential

area for the large number of people stationed at Whidbey Naval Air Station, has grown rapidly since 1940. It went up from 376 in 1940 to an estimated 2,325 in 1957. Langley, a retirement residential area and a farm trade center, has grown steadily. Most of the unincorporated villages in the county such as Utsallady, Camano, Freeland and San de Fuca have grown from the recent influx of people seeking summer or retirement homes.

Typical of many counties of the western United States, Island County has been a melting pot of immigrants from many foreign lands. Good farming land at low prices attracted many immigrants from Canada, Norway, Sweden, Germany and the British Isles before 1890. Nearly a third of the settlers before 1890 were foreign-born. From 1890 to 1920 there was a significant immigration of farm people born in Holland. By 1920 Hollanders were the largest foreign-born group followed by Scandinavians and Germans. In 1920 over one-fifth of the population were foreign-born. By 1950 immigration from Europe and Canada had decreased and foreign-born residents amounted to only 8 percent of Island County's inhabitants. The Hollanders had a great influence on the agricultural development of the county through their farming practices in dairying, poultry raising and horticulture in the northern part of Whidbey Island.

Table 4.- Foreign-Born White Population, Island County
1890, 1920 and 1950

Country of Birth	1890	1920	1950
England and Wales.....	49	76	69
Scotland.....	22	18	18
Northern Ireland.....	--	--	1
Ireland (Eire).....	23	21	10
Norway.....	119	234	141
Sweden.....	40	186	105
Denmark.....	9	43	38
Netherlands.....	--	283	134
Switzerland.....	5	9	--
France.....	1	3	3
Germany.....	39	132	59
Poland.....	--	1	4
Czechoslovakia.....	--	--	2
Austria.....	--	8	3
Yugoslavia.....	--	1	2
Russia (U.S.S.R.).....	20	6	2
Finland.....	--	54	19
Italy.....	1	6	1
Canada-French.....	--	10	8
Canada-Other.....	135	142	207
All other countries...	95	17	58
Totals	559	1,250	884
Percent foreign-born	31	23	8

Source: U.S. Census, Population

Agriculture is the leading occupation in Island County. About 24 percent of the total workers who are self-employed or earn salaries and wages are in agriculture. Government work for the U. S. Navy and other federal and state agencies and miscellaneous services are other major fields of employment. Manufacturing, construction and work in wholesale and retail stores are minor wage sources. As a whole, the employment of the labor force is well diversified. In the last 15 years agriculture has declined as an employment field. Part-time farming combined with government, construction and manufacturing work in the Anacortes and Everett industrialized areas has increased.

Table 5.- Employment of the Population
Island County, 1950

Types of Employment	Male Workers	Female Workers	Total Workers	Percent of Workers
Total employed workers	2,123	610	2,733	100.0
Agriculture	555	90	645	23.6
Forestry and fisheries	53	2	55	2.0
Mining	4	--	4	.1
Construction	277	3	280	10.2
Manufacturing	260	17	277	10.2
Transportation	86	11	97	3.5
Retail and wholesale stores	244	129	373	13.6
Miscellaneous services	266	213	479	17.5
Public administration (government employment)	329	106	435	15.9
Other employment	49	39	88	3.4

Source: U. S. Census, Population

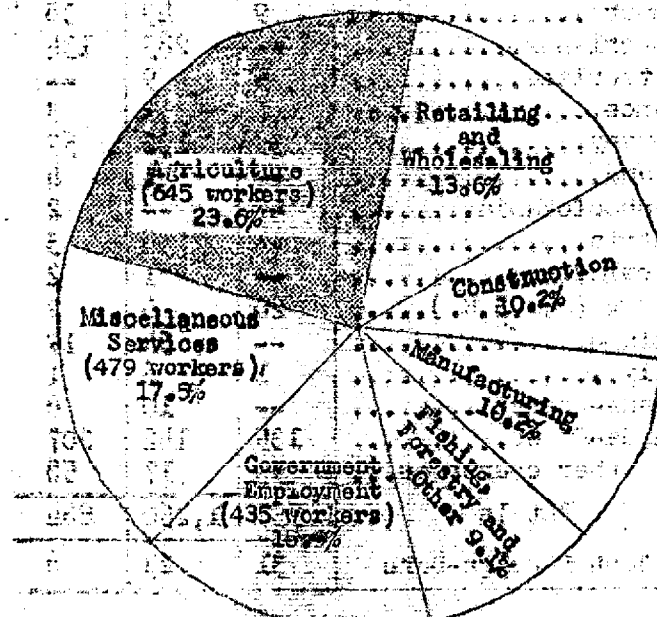


Figure 3.- Agricultural Employment Compared With Other Employment in Island County, 1950
(Based on U.S. Census of Population, 1950)